

Art Notes: Biennale, Bye Bye?

By GRACE GLUECK

What kind of art should the U. S. send to this June's Venice Biennale, the international art exhibition that is also a trade fair, fashion show, political extravaganza and Telstar of art trends?

The question arises from last week's cancellation of the Guggenheim Museum's commission to arrange the U. S. exhibit, given last December by the sponsoring government agency, the National Collection of Fine Arts. The NCFA charged that the Guggenheim had dallied in revealing its plans for a show that would entail formidable staging costs, leaving too short a time in which to raise the necessary funds.

But the cancellation also brought to light an art-world uproar over the choices themselves — never officially announced but ineluctably leaked. There were actually two Guggenheim lists, it was learned last week. The first had been submitted to the agency by the museum's curator Lawrence Alloway; the second was a version of Alloway's list as amended by the museum's director, Thomas M. Messer.

Alloway's list comprised five choices: 1950-51 work of the late Jackson Pollock; a retrospective show of boxes by the constructionist Joseph Cornell; a token work of the late sculptor David Smith, re-

cent oeuvre of pop artist Roy Lichtenstein, and the sculpture of Ernest Trova, an artist fairly new on the New York scene.

Messer's amendments eliminated both the Lichtenstein and Pollock choices, substituting 3-dimensional work by painter Larry Rivers and the sculpture of Isamu Noguchi. The revisions turned the show into an all-sculpture affair which, it should be pointed out, was not without publicity value for the museum. Its 1967 Guggenheim International is likely to be all-sculpture too. "The Biennale exhibit would be like a movie trailer for the big feature," noted one observer.

Neither list, in fact, was rapturously received by the sector of the art world most interested in Biennale affairs. Enthusiasm over the choice of Cornell seemed unanimous. But there was general feeling that most of the other selections failed adequately to reveal "what's going on today." The revised Messer list had brought a threat from some dealers to stage a "counter-Biennale" of their own. "We are the world's art center. The cultural image we export should reveal what's being produced right now," says one. "Europe doesn't want our stale news."

Harry Abrams, collector and art book publisher who is

working on the organization of a New York Art Biennial to begin next year, feels that "only the most avant garde work" should be sent to the Venice show. "The person who's involved with art goes to the Biennale to see new images. As or the person not involved, it does him no harm at all to be exposed to work that shocks."

Others believe a more balanced diet should be sent—"for example part modern old master, part new work that hasn't been shown abroad," says collector Larry Aldrich.

At this point, the NCFA has not yet indicated which museum it will tap to replace the Guggenheim. Last week, though, to staff members harried by inadequate Biennale exhibition space, no funds and the lack of time to prepare, the question of what should be sent abroad seemed secondary to the question of whether the U.S. would have a show at all.

IN TYPE

Just like their Paris counterparts, local galleries are beginning to burgeon as book publishers — though scarcely on a volume scale. Their editions tend to hover in the hundreds, and the works themselves are far from best-seller stuff. The Tibor de Nagy Gallery, for ex-

ample, will bring out a poetry volume next week, "May 24th Or So," by James Schuyler. The paperback edition of 300 will sell for \$2 a copy. John B. Myers, the gallery's director, publishes a book or so a year, feels his ventures "help to preserve the gallery's non-commercial atmosphere. Besides, it's good to get into other artistic media."

Meanwhile, the Fischbach Gallery has slightly more elaborate plans. It will publish a paperback series, in editions of 2,000 (for possible campus distribution) beginning with the collected *plays* of James Schuyler. Then plays by Frank O'Hara, and the poems of (successively) Bill Berkson, Edwin Denby, John Giorno. They'll sell for \$1.50 or \$2.

The LeFebre Gallery has also broken into print. It has just produced an outsize volume of Julius Bissier's "Brush Drawings," in an edition of 150, selling for \$25. Next work: a book of "cinetizations," suitable for framing, by Belgian sculptor Pol Bury. ("Cinetization," a Bury art, is an ingenious process of scrambling pictures for trick effects.) That comes in an edition of 50, will sell for \$185. "I want to give my artists a chance to express themselves in other media," says John LeFebre, who doesn't expect to make a dime on the

books. "If one of them has a poem to illustrate, I'll work with him. I want to do what other publishers can't bother with."

COLLAGE

Not one, but two bang-up kinetic sculpture shows are opening in San Francisco almost simultaneously—"Kinetic Currents," at the San Francisco Museum of Art, March 20 — April 10; "Directions in Kinetic Sculpture," at the Art Gallery of the University of California at Berkeley, March 18—May 1. Both openings will combine four days of activities in a Kinetic Weekend . . . Meanwhile, at Stanford University, not too far away, a beam switchyard, waveguide loads, magnets, and other components of the Stanford Linear Accelerator, a 2-mile long machine for high-energy physics research now under construction, are on display in the Stanford Museum as "beautiful and expressive objects sharing certain qualities with contemporary art" . . . "Christina, Queen of Sweden," a panorama of 17th-century European culture, is the upcoming Council of Europe show at Stockholm, July to October. . . . By way of brightening postal decor, England's General Post Office is encouraging branches to exhibit the work of local artists.